



IN THE STEPS
OF THE
GREAT PHYSICIAN

By
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IT was a great day for the Arabian Mission when the first woman missionary took her place among its membership. There were to be no women in the mission, our pioneers had decided. They thought that the field was not ready for women and that the Arabian living conditions were too hard for them. Cupid smiled when he heard that decision, for he was not of the same opinion. And then, suddenly, one of our pioneers changed his mind (though he was a man, or, *perhaps*, because he was a man), and he realized that the work needed nothing so much as the life of a certain young lady now known to you all as Mrs. Zwemer.

It was well that she, whose privilege it was to take the Word of Life to the Arab women for the first time, was a medical missionary. In this most fanatical Muhammadan country, never could she have done so much to break down the wall of prejudice and hatred had it not been for her nurse's training. Lovingly, patiently, untiringly, she ministered to her suffering Arab sisters until the opening wedge had done its work and the way was prepared for the ever widening woman's missionary work of our mission.

The Arabian Mission is now twenty-nine years old. It has on its roll besides the list of evangelistic and educational workers, the names of seven women doctors and seven trained nurses. Of these there remain available today only two doctors and three nurses, two of whom have not yet finished language study and have not yet (1918) been appointed to work. Need one say more to emphasize the urgent need for recruits?

Of the seven women doctors referred to, there were two who stayed for only a year or less and then retired. Two others have laid down their lives for Arabia, and their memorial is not so much the modest stones that mark their graves in Bahrein and Basrah, as the loving and grateful memory in the hearts of those they served. Marian Wells Thoms and Christine Iverson Bennett were splendid women. The Arab women love to tell you about them. There are



A YOUNG SHEIKH

those whose eyes still brim with tears as they tell you how these talented, unselfish women, even in their own weakness and suffering, were ever ready to forget self and to spend their strength for others.

No other woman has given so many years of medical service for Arabia as Mrs. Worrall. After sixteen years on the field she is now staying at home, superintending the education of her children. It was through her enthusiastic efforts that the mission hospital in Basrah was first opened, in the face of untold opposition. Its first beds were supplied with sheets from her personal linen closet. Those who were associated with her in Basrah remember how she toiled to meet the demands of a large and ever-increasing practice. During an epidemic of cholera I have

known her to rise at earliest break of day, before the children waked or medical calls began to come, in order to prepare a pamphlet for Arab women, teaching them prevention and first aid in combating the terrible disease raging in their midst.

Mrs. Worrall's place in Basrah was later taken by Mrs. Bennett, who carried on that, our heaviest woman's medical work, for five years, and who then succumbed to typhus fever, contracted during ministrations to sick Turkish soldiers. Shortly after her death the doors of the hospital had to be closed for lack of a doctor. In all our great America is there no woman doctor to open those doors for the Arab women of Basrah?

Of the two remaining physicians on our list, one, Dr. Hosmon, is now on furlough, and the other is working in Kuwait.

Trained nurses in Arabia have to take upon themselves many duties they never guessed would be theirs when they volunteered. Seldom can they confine themselves to the superintendence of a hospital. The great majority of Moslem women will not even permit a man doctor to see their faces, so that the nurse, if there is one, must diagnose and prescribe, as well as administer treatment. She must generally carry the responsibility of the work alone, meeting emergencies as best she can, and hoping for the day when the mission's resources in personnel will allow us to have both a woman doctor and a trained nurse to work in the same station.

Only one nurse of the seven on our roll was enabled to concentrate her efforts on nurse's work alone. This was Miss Holzhauser, who accomplished wonders in organizing the Basrah Hospital while Dr. and Mrs. Bennett were there. Miss Holzhauser was also a sufferer from typhus fever, as was Dr. Bennett himself, at the time when Mrs. Bennett died. Fortunately, she was able to resist the disease and later to return to America, but it is doubtful whether she will ever be able to attempt work in Arabia again.

When Dr. Zwemer was called to his literary work in Cairo, Arabia lost another nurse in Mrs. Zwemer. A few years later Mrs. Vogel retired from the field after seven years of service.

Mrs. Cantine, who by training is a nurse, has for some time been appointed to evangelistic work, by her own choice, but she finds frequent use for her medical knowledge and skill as she comes in contact with the women in their houses.

The mission is expecting great things of Mrs. Harrison and Miss Van Pelt when they shall have finished their language examinations. It is hard to be patient and wait two long years for a knowledge of Arabic before entering practical service, but experience has proved this to be wise.

There is still another nurse in the Arabian mission not yet mentioned, and she is the only one at present in active work. For several years Mrs. Van Peurseem superintended the Mason Memorial Hospital



CHILDREN OF KUWEIT

sionaries have accepted temporary

in Bahrein, besides taking charge of the woman's dispensary. To her is largely due the friendly and trustful attitude of women patients, so noticeable there now. At present she is carrying on, unaided, the Woman's Dispensary in Maskat. This work in Maskat was founded and built by Dr. Hosmon, and, but for Mrs. Van Peurse, must have been closed during the doctor's furlough.

This is a meagre chronicle of the woman doctors and trained nurses of the Arabian Mission. But we must not stop here for much of the medical work for Arab women has been done by missionaries who were neither doctors nor trained nurses. At times when there has been no qualified worker to keep open the medical work, evangelistic mis-medical appointments while the

emergency lasted. Mrs. Mylrea, through her love for the women, and her interest in Dr. Mylrea's medical work in Kuwait, has learned to do much to relieve sickness, and has been able to take charge of the woman's department of the hospital when, but for her, the work must have been discontinued. In fact, she so won for herself a reputation for skill that some of her former patients later declined to consult the newly arrived woman doctor, preferring treatment by her whom they had already learned to trust.

Miss Lutton, too, has been appointed to medical work at times, and in fact she always has her little stock of medicines which she administers, well mixed with her ready humor, when need arrives.

Miss Scardefield has also made good use of the medicine and surgery she learned in the missionary training institute where she prepared for service in Arabia. To thousands of Arab women she has been both doctor and nurse, handling with success instruments intended only for physicians. Indeed, I suppose there is hardly a woman in our mission who has not in some degree tried her hand in treating the sick around her. It takes a stout heart to turn away sufferers unaided, when sometimes even the simplest remedies which every American housewife knows, would be sufficient to relieve distress. And you, too, gentle reader, if you should come to Arabia, I should not be surprised if you would soon learn to put drops into sore eyes, to pull teeth, and even to open an abscess, rather than turn away those who come to you for help and have nowhere else to go.



LANSING HOSPITAL, BUSRAH

Having been introduced to the personnel of our woman's medical force, you may want to know something about the character of the

work. Much of the medical effort in Arabia is still along pioneer lines. In some of the stations, however, the labor of a quarter of a century has won such a reputation that prejudice and distrust have almost disappeared. Were a medical woman to volunteer to open the closed doors of the Basrah Hospital she would be immediately besieged by rich and poor, Moslem, Christian and Jew. Opportunities for medical and surgical work of every description would be so great that she would soon find her practice a severe tax on her physical strength.

On the other hand, were she to be sent to open a dispensary in one of the more fanatical coast towns or if she were very fortunate and were allowed to settle in the heart of Arabia, that longed-for goal as yet unseen by any woman missionary, her need would not be so much for bodily strength, as for patience. She would find herself weighed in the balance with native midwives and found wanting before she had even been given a trial. She would hear of hundreds dying through the ignorance of these untaught women, and yet would not be allowed to profane the homes of the sick ones by her presence. She would be looked upon with scorn by the veiled true believers in the Prophet Muhammad, on him be prayers and peace! But after some years the women would learn to trust her and cease to fear her remedies.

It is not surprising that confidence is so hard to win. Arab women know nothing of the outside world. They have scarcely heard of the



HOSPITAL AT KUWEIT

existence of those seemingly shameless women who do not cover their faces in the presence of men. To them the greatest of all sins is un-

belief in the Moslem Allah, and the Prophet Muhammad. To them we are shameless infidels. Why should they trust us? I remember in the early days at Kuweit how I sat in my dispensary day after day, waiting and wishing some patients would come. Those who did consult me were usually chronic, hopeless cases, for whom I could do little or nothing. And then, one day, a delegation of women came to my house to investigate my claims.

"Who taught you to treat sick people?" they asked. "Did your father?"

"No," was the reply.

"Well then, did your husband?"

"No."

"Then, who did teach you?"

It was not easy to explain to these women about the medical schools in our country where women can become doctors, but I tried to make them understand. So much being settled they began to investigate the extent of my qualifications.

"Can you treat eyes?" they demanded.

"Oh, yes!"

"Can you treat rheumatism?"

"Yes." I refrained from saying I could cure it.

"Can you treat abscesses?"

"Yes."

And then the object of the conversation came to light, for there was a woman among them who had an abscess. Finally, after a whispered consultation among my callers, I was given permission to treat that abscess. Not to open it, however. Oh, no! But to treat it with applications, and so I passed my first practical examination in Arabia.

If all the opposition to pioneer work were sincere, our task would be easier. The Evil One does not like to see us open a new station. As soon as we begin he starts circulating a lot of false reports about us. The Moslem leaders tell their people that we live immoral lives, that we steal little children and put them to death, or that we put poison into the wells of drinking water. We must learn to have our "good be evil spoken of."

Only last winter a woman who is now a loyal friend of ours told me of a conversation she overheard on the streets years ago, before she knew us personally. It was in regard to a woman who had been brought into the hospital with a stab wound of the lung. For a month we treated her and cared for her as tenderly as we could, but the injury had been very severe, and at last she passed away. During her dying hours we did not leave her at all, but did all we could to relieve her suffering, assuring her of Christ's love for her and of His power to save her if she would but trust Him. And yet this is the conversation which our friend heard between two women of Kuwait:



DR. CALVERLEY AND LITTLE GRACE

"You know Lulu, that woman who was stabbed and was taken to the American Hospital?"

"Yes."

"Well, they kept her a month and then got tired of having her around and gave her poison so that she died."

The people believe these lies about us. Why shouldn't they? Even now there are hundreds in Kuwait who have perhaps never even seen us, and yet have heard so much against us that they would die in agony rather than be treated by those whom they believe to be thoroughly wicked and unscrupulous.

When the odds against one are so great, the joy one feels in the realization of progress is correspondingly keen. The constantly increasing size of the clinics, the greater frequency of out-calls, the fact that many women are now willing to submit to surgical measures, and, best of all, that sometimes we are allowed to supplant the dirty midwife in obstetrical work, all this progress after six years of waiting is to us a source of great encouragement. Just to open the eyes of one sightless from cataract, just to save the vision of sadly neglected babies, to set the broken bones, to bind up the burns and ulcers of the adorable little Arab children, even to pull the teeth that have ached for days and nights in a country where there is no dentist, even these physical achievements make the medical missionary's life worth while.



MRS. MYLREA AND DR. CALVERLEY CONDUCTING GOSPEL SERVICE
AT THE DISPENSARY, KUWEIT

And yet you know and I know that we are not in Arabia primarily for medical achievements. We are here because Christ sent us to preach the Gospel by word and example. No matter what the discouragements in our work, nothing can rob us of the joy of the knowledge that we are Christ's instruments for the building up of His

kingdom in the cradle of Islam. He has deigned to use us, though we be vessels of common clay, to carry His most precious gift to the women of Arabia. No matter how commonplace our duties nor how trivial our service may seem, it is He who gave the task, the results are in His hands, and the victory is sure.

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